



MONTANA EARLY RECOVERY WORKSHOP: WHAT WE ARE LEARNING AND WHAT COMES NEXT

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Montana's 2017 Wildfire Season

- One of the worst wildfire seasons on record
- The worst smoke on record
- One of the longest wildfire seasons on record
- The worst drought on record
- 1.25 million acres burned
- Two lives lost
- Volunteer fire departments make up more than 90% of fire departments in our state.



Lolo Peak Fire & Caribou Fire



Rice Ridge Fire & Lodge Pole Fire



Montana Early Recovery Workshop



Challenges

- People not being prepared (what to do, decision making, response, public education)
- **There isn't a "sand box" of organizations and entities involved in fires**
- **If you don't see it, smell it, feel it, it doesn't exist or matter = loss of momentum**
- **"Wildfires are part of summer"**
- Lack of volunteers
- Protocols are not widely understood
- Weeds/weed control
- Mutual aid requests
- Potential for increased depression and suicide
- Improved communication through long disaster events (example: between fire departments and county agencies)
- **Some communities don't know if they have a disaster plan or what it is**
- Relationships and communication between agencies and organizations needs to be stronger (who is doing what and how are they responding)
- Improved communication (too many resource lists)
- Under-resourced county emergency management
- Need for a common operating picture

Opportunities

- Increased preparedness and education
- So many organizations involved in response and recovery
- More volunteers
- Communication network established
- Building relationships proactively (between fire departments and residents and county agencies)
- Beginning to put protocols in place (preplan and train together)
- Local Emergency Planning Committees

“Aha” Moments

- We need volunteer fire crews
- We need younger volunteers
- We need a directory of resources that includes every level of government and every type of resource (who is involved, what do they do and where do they do it, and what resources do they have available to help)

What do you want to know more about?

- Air quality building standards for new school construction
- Tools and a toolkit for disaster response
- Community plan/social media plan for disaster
- Understanding of what other communities have done that works in disaster
- What resources are available and how are they accessed?
- Potential Referral Network for resources during disaster

Who is missing from the conversation?

- VOAD President
- Contrarians
- Tribal Leaders
- Businesses (esp. in small towns)
- MT National Guard
- Realtors
- Office of Public Instruction
- County Commissioner
- Chamber of Commerce
- BLM
- Colleges and Universities
- State Suicide Prevention Director
- Law Enforcement
- Spiritual Leaders
- Superintendents
- Principles
- School leaders
- AmeriCorps

What isn't being discussed that should be?

- How can we anticipate the untold needs of children who were traumatized by fires?
- How can we support arts programs in schools so students can express their needs?
- Public health impacts especially to most vulnerable
- Secondary trauma – especially emotional and spiritual care
- Personal responsibility in preparedness
- Training (school) using disaster focus for helping people in disaster
- Role or risk of suicide and depression
- Could duty officers incorporate counseling into wildfire events?
- Mitigation at the household level
- Opportunities for more efficiencies & coordination for resources to help people impacted

What's Next

- Follow up surveys will be sent out to attendees along with meeting notes
- The next workshop will focus on identified challenges and opportunities
- We will expand the invite list to include **those that were on the who's missing list**

Thank you

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